

## Veterans Innovations Program Board Members

### **Chairman - Captain Larry Seaquist of the U.S. Navy (Ret.)**

A thirty-two year Navy veteran, Mr. Seaquist is active in Kitsap County veterans' issues, including the Military Committee of the Port Orchard Chamber of Commerce.

### **John E. Lee, Director of the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs**

Mr. Lee is a Vietnam War veteran and retired Command Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army. He has worked for the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs for the past fifteen years and is responsible for developing the state's Memorandum of Understanding to serve Washington's National Guard and Reserve soldiers when they return home from deployments.

### **Karen Lee, Director of the Employment Security Department**

A West Point graduate, Ms. Lee served in the U.S. Army for five years before attending the University of Washington School of Law and obtaining her law degree. Ms. Lee has initiated a statewide 'HireVetsFirst' campaign to encourage businesses to hire veterans following their military service.

### **Colonel Mary J. Forbes, Director of the Human Resources Division and J1, Joint Forces Command, Washington National Guard**

Ms. Forbes is a key leader in the statewide partnership for assisting Guard and Reserve personnel transitioning from combat to civilian life.

### **Charles Earl, Executive director of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges**

Mr. Earl, a three-year U.S. Air Force veteran, served as a Lieutenant on bases within the United States. The State Community and Technical Colleges provide tuition waivers to veterans, the dependents of disabled veterans or veterans killed in the line of duty and also provide veterans assistance with GI Bill benefits.

### **Sue Mauermann, Deputy director of the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED)**

Ms. Mauermann oversees the agency's key initiatives and manages CTED's six divisions: community services, local government, housing services, international trade, economic development and energy policy. CTED is the state agency responsible for enhancing and promoting sustainable communities and economic vitality in Washington.

### **Michael D. Hudson, Executive director of the Institute for Workforce Development and Economic Sustainability, a not-for-profit affiliate of the Association of Washington Business**

Mr. Hudson, founder of the Institute for Workforce Development, is a sixteen-year veteran of the U.S. Army and Washington National Guard.

The Veterans Innovations Program Board respectfully submits the following report to the Washington State Legislature. The report, required by House Bill 2754 passed during the 2006 Legislative Session, provides information on how the Veterans Innovations Program is being implemented to assist veterans and their families. In addition, the report includes information on the number of applications for assistance, the grant amount awarded each project, a description of each project, and performance measures of the program.

## **BACKGROUND:**

During the 2006 Legislative Session, a number of legislators determined that additional resources were needed to assist some of Washington's more than 11,000 citizen soldiers as they demobilized and transitioned back to civilian life. However, they also understood that simply identifying new resources would not be enough to address the many issues facing this population of new veterans.

A series of meetings with veteran leaders, stakeholders and policy advisors resulted in the passage of the Veterans Innovations Program, designed to allow service providers the flexibility to address the unique situation of each returning veteran.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE VETERANS INNOVATIONS PROGRAM**

The Veterans Innovations Program is divided into two distinct funding opportunities:

- **The Defender's Fund** – created to provide assistance to members of the Washington National Guard and Reservists who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Noble Eagle, and who are experiencing financial hardships in employment, education, housing, and health care due to the significant period of time away from home serving our country. Eligible veterans may receive a one-time grant of no more than five hundred dollars.
- **The Competitive Grant Program** – created to fund innovative initiatives to provide crisis and emergency relief, education, training and employment assistance to veterans and their families in their communities.
  - **The Veterans Innovations Program Board** – created to exercise the powers related to the competitive grant program. The Board is charged with establishing a competitive process to solicit proposals for and prioritize project applications for potential funding. The board considered three categories when developing the competitive grant program:
    1. Crisis and emergency relief; (original funding target = \$3 million)
    2. Education, training, and employment assistance; (original funding target = \$6 million) and
    3. Community outreach and resources (original funding target = \$1 million).

As with most legislative initiatives, the final bill had some key differences from the original bill. For the Veterans Innovations Program, the largest change was the amount of funding provided in the final budget. (This information is highlighted simply due to the fact that while the total funding amount changed significantly, the programs identified in the legislation did not change. This is illustrated to help frame the decisions the board initially faced.)

The final budget provided \$2 million for the Veterans Innovations Program.

This is a significant new source of funding for veterans programs, offering \$1 million for the Defender's Fund and \$1 million for the Competitive Grant Program.

### THE DEFENDER'S FUND

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs quickly defined processes and procedures to administer the Defender's Fund portion of the Veterans Innovations Program. Partnering with the Washington Military Department and the Employment Security Department, the eligibility and application information was developed and disseminated to service providers via e-mail, the web and in-person meetings.

The Defender's Fund provides one-time emergency grants of up to \$500 to current or former National Guard and Reservists, activated under Title 10, experiencing financial hardships due to deployments in support of Operation Noble Eagle; Operation Iraqi Freedom, and/or Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs received authority to administer the Defender's Fund on July 1, 2006. The first veteran received assistance from the Defender's Fund on July 5, 2006.

Total Defenders Fund applications Received	46
Total Defenders Fund applications Funded	42
* Total Defenders Fund applications Denied	3
Total Defenders Fund applications Pending	1

As of December 31, 2006, forty-two veterans and their families have received assistance through the Defender's Fund. This has resulted in the issuance of sixty-four checks to creditors/vendors for a total of \$19,947, an average amount of \$474.93 per veteran.

(\* Three applications were denied from veterans who did not serve during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, or Noble Eagle, or did not have eligible National Guard / Reserve service.)

Veterans have requested funding for a variety of emergency needs. The chart below provides a general breakdown of these requests:

Emergency Need	Number of Checks Issued
Education/Training	4
Employment Support	9
Family Crisis	1
Financial Hardship	2
Health Care Services	2
Residential Stability	25
Support Services	21
	64

**VETERANS INNOVATIONS PROGRAM BOARD**

Following the appointments to the Veterans Innovations Program Board in June of 2006, the appointees quickly met to establish the funding priorities for the \$1 million available.

The legislation identified several potential uses for the funding and directed the Board to prioritize project applications for potential funding.

The Board quickly engaged in discussions to determine how best to focus the resources available through the Competitive Grant Program. Board members focused on developing a results oriented program that considers the long-term well-being of the veterans and their families and focuses on employment or financial stability.

The Board considered both individual and community grants as venues for providing assistance to veterans and their families. Ultimately, the decision was made to focus initially on individual grants to veterans and their families; however, this does not preclude the Board from developing the community grant opportunity in the future, particularly if additional funding becomes available.

The Individual Competitive Grant Program was developed to go beyond the initial emergency assistance provided through the Defender's Fund, and focus on activities that help veterans and their families obtain sustainable family-wage employment. The maximum grant amount is \$3,500, unless a waiver is obtained.

Applicants must have served in Operation Noble Eagle; Operation Iraqi Freedom and/or Operation Enduring Freedom or have been awarded a Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary or Service Medal.

Individual grants are tailored to meet the needs of the veteran or their family. Below are examples of how a grant could be used:

- Supplement wages for on-the-job training or apprenticeship programs;
- Tuition payments for education or certification programs; and/or

Supportive services such as transportation assistance, housing, child care, or other needs-related payments necessary to enable an individual to resolve crisis situations, enter training or employment, and/or retain employment.

The Individual Competitive Grant Program was developed using a model of individual case management. Veterans may self-refer to the program, but most are referred through a network of veterans service providers, including:

- Washington Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Washington Military Department;
- Employment Security Department (Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Coordinators);
- Veterans Service Organizations – Field Service Network;
- Other Providers.

In addition to providing funding through the Competitive Grant Program, this network ensures veterans are connected with the many benefits and entitlements they earned through military service. To date, veterans utilizing the program have received assistance in the following areas from the following agencies/organizations.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

County Veterans Assistance Funds

Minuteman Program

American Legion – Temporary Financial Assistance (Families w/children)

Soldiers' Angels

MOMS

Salvation Army

Red Cross

Army Emergency Relief (low-interest emergency loans Retirees & AGS)

**COUNSELING**

Consumer Counseling Northwest (CCNW) 1-800-244-1183

Safeplace Hotline

Substance Abuse Counseling

Family Reconciliation Services (Free for families in crisis)

**EDUCATION**

Centralia Community College

South Puget Sound Community College

Subsidized Stafford Loans, State Need Grant, Pell Grant

VA Vocational Rehabilitation (VR&E or Ch 31)

**EMPLOYMENT**

Work Source

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

County WorkForce Programs

Quality Staffing

Comcast

**SOCIAL RESOURCES**

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC- DSHS)

Food Stamps – DSHS

**OTHER RESOURCES**

Puget Sound Energy Low Income Assistance

Red Cross

Salvation Army

Thurston County Health Department

WA ST Dept. Of Health

The application for the Competitive Grant Program was made available in October of 2006.

As of December 31, 2006, twenty-one applications have been received for the Individual Competitive Grant Program. One application has been denied from a veteran who did not serve

during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, or Noble Eagle. Four applications are pending.

Total Individual Grant applications Received	21
Total Individual Grant applications Approved	16
Total Individual Grant applications Denied	1
Total Individual Grant applications Pending	4

As of Jan 5, 2007, the Individual Competitive Program has issued 62 checks to assist 16 veterans for a total of \$30,129, an average grant of \$1,883.06.

Need	Number of Checks Issued	Amount
Education/Training	2	\$1,431
Employment Support	11	\$3,837
Financial	1	\$1,118
Health Care Services	6	\$1,714
Residential Stability	12	\$12,701
Support Services	31	\$10,445
	62	\$30,129

#### INDIVIDUAL COMPETITIVE GRANTS:

As a part of the case plan, participants are required to participate in financial counseling with a goal of developing a budget that can maintain financial stability.

On the Job Training Participants are required to acknowledge their agreement to participate by signing a "Statement of Participation"

- a. Agreements are tailored to the individual, most require financial or credit counseling
- b. Some may require continued participation in Rehabilitation Counseling

Current on the Job Training efforts have been managed through a private staffing agency working with various companies in the Pierce County area. Most of these jobs are in the \$12.00 - \$16.00 range and offer training in operating and maintenance production line equipment.

A detailed description of each of the Individual Competitive Grants is below:

GRANT NUMBER	GRANT AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
King G001	\$3,500	OJT Project (520 hrs)	520 hrs Skill training 520 hrs Job Experience FTE w Benefits @ \$ 15 per hr Required Financial Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed financial counseling, following budget</li> <li>- Has completed 120 hrs of OJT project</li> </ul>
King G002	\$1,500	Emergency Financial Assistance	Financial stability Required Credit Counseling VR&E Counseling
Lewis G001	\$1,500	Employment Support	FTE w Benefits @ \$ per hr Required Financial Counseling
Lewis G002	\$2,000	Training - CDL License	Formal Skills Training License/Certification in Skill FTE w/ benefits
Lewis G003	\$1,000	Education Support	Pursue Educational Opportunities while working Required Application for Student Loans and Grants Required Financial Counseling Increase Eligibility for Promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently enrolled in CC night classes</li> </ul>

GRANT NUMBER	GRANT AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Lewis G004	\$3,500	Employment Support	*Resolve Military Pay issue will help resolve financial hardship Expedited VA Claim will resolve situation and achieve Financial Stability <i>* 100% Disabled Vet, no pay x 4 months, unable to work, recovering from wounds</i>
Lewis G005	\$3,500		FTE w Benefits Required Financial Counseling
Lewis G006	\$3,500	Employment Support	FTE w Benefits Required Financial Counseling
Mason G001	\$3,500 Plus \$1,500 waiver	Employment Support	FTE w Benefits @ \$15.00 per hr Required Financial Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Both veteran and spouse participated in financial counseling</li> <li>- Employment goal has been met. Individual has secured long-term, gainful employment @ \$23.08 per hr. (\$48K annual) w/ benefits</li> </ul>
Mason G002	\$3,500	Employment Support	FTE w Benefits Required Financial Counseling <i>* disability limits employment opportunities until fully recovered</i>
Pierce G001	\$3,500	Employment Support	FTE w Benefits Required Financial Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed Financial Counseling</li> <li>- Continues to seek FTE</li> <li>- Working Intern Project currently</li> </ul>



GRANT NUMBER	GRANT AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Pierce G002	\$3,500	Financial Hardship	Financial Stability Required Financial Counseling VR&E Counseling <i>* disability limits employment opportunities</i>
Thurston G001	\$3,500	OJT Project (520 hrs)	520 hrs Skill training 520 hrs Job Experience FTE w Benefits @ \$ 18.00 per hr Required Financial Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed required Financial Counseling</li> <li>- Has completed OJT 260 hrs of OJT</li> </ul>
Thurston G002	\$2,500	OJT Project (520 hrs)	520 hrs Skill training 520 hrs Job Experience FTE w Benefits @ \$17.00 per hr Required Financial Counseling Required to Continue Readjustment Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has completed 520 hrs OJT</li> <li>- Hired \$17.00 per hr with benefits</li> <li>- Continues readjustment counseling</li> </ul>
Thurston G003	\$3,500	Financial Hardship	Financial Stability Required to attend Financial Counseling Expedited VA Claim will resolve situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VA claim was expedited</li> <li>- Completed required counseling</li> <li>- Monthly VA compensation and back payment resolved financial hardship</li> </ul>

GRANT NUMBER	GRANT AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Thurston G004		Financial Hardship	Financial Stability Required Application for Student Loans and Grants Required Financial Counseling

